

NEWSLETTER

TASMANIAN UFO INVESTIGATION CENTRE
FEBRUARY 2003. EDITION 93.

YEAR IN REVIEW 2002.

The year 2002 would be one of the Centre's most forgettable years since the groups inception over 35 years ago. The sightings, apart from one case of extra interest in May, comprised just a few lights in the sky reports. Calls to the Centre were also down overall on recent years whilst little mention of the phenomena appeared in the local press during 2002. The inevitable video of orange lights came to hand but it appears to have been yet another 'garbage bag balloon' over Launceston. However, of more interest was a January photograph of a sunset taken at Sorell. A bright light is visible in the sky beneath some of the dark clouds, nothing was noticed by the photographer at the time the picture was being taken. No check on aircraft movements was possible due to the time delay before the Centre was aware of the picture. A possible explanation for the light may have been due to circling light aircraft from the nearby airfield. As expected most of the years 65 reports were due to misidentification of astronomical objects, only 4 cases remaining unidentified, one each from January and February and two from May. For reasons unknown few cases from Tasmania were made via the UFOnetwork Hotline. Plenty of information from around the world was received by the group during the year, a deluge of UFO reports on the Internet. However, the value of overseas UFO sightings could be questioned at times. Some reports do not seem to have been given much scrutiny as a fair number of cases would appear to have rational explanations but were still reported under the heading of UFOs. Membership has remained stable whilst for the first time in years members

meetings have been held every two months. Attendance at meetings on a percentage basis has been good, whilst the meetings themselves have been full of interest and relaxed discussion.

Meeting dates in 2003 will be February 27th, April 24th, June 26th, August 28th, October 9th and December 11th.

SIGHTINGS

2002. January 14th. 9.10pm. Launceston.

Just what did Mr P notice for about 6 minutes in the clear evening sky over Launceston. It could have been an aircraft but air Traffic say there were no movements in the area at that time.

Approaching from the north-west at a very slow speed was a round dark blob. It looked to be moving up towards a bank of dark cloud over the city. Prior to entering the cloud it became stationary and a solid red light came below the blob. It then moved up through the cloud and was lost from sight. Mr P waited 20 minutes for the object to reappear but nothing further was sighted. Whilst waiting Mr P saw a commercial flight heading north through the same cloud then out and beyond the same cloud. The evening sky was bright with the evening sunlight which made a sharp contrast between the dark cloud and surrounding blue sky. Case Unexplained.

2002. January 30th. 8.50pm. Sorell.

Mr S had decided to take some photographs of the clouds lit up in the western sky by the setting sun. Using his digital camera he took a number of photographs as he moved his camera from north-west around to south-west. Later when inspecting the pictures he

noticed on the photograph to the south-west there was a bright spot of light below the clouds. A round white spot with a suggestion of a light patch above can be seen, it stands out well below the middle layer orange clouds in the background. The hills and lower clouds below are by this time in the shade. Nothing was noticed at the time the photographs were being taken. Due to the passage of time follow up on aircraft movements was not possible. It is known that light aircraft from time to time perform evening or night circuits of the nearby airport, some pilots keep their landing lights on whilst on their circuits. The spot is sharp and clear suggesting little if any movement whilst the photograph was being taken, this seems to indicate that an astronomical explanation is remote. The picture is puzzling but with the lack of visual observation we are unable to log the case as unexplained. Insufficient information.

**2002 February 23rd. 10.42pm.
Mountain River.**

Yet another three lights report as a Huon Valley resident and his partner followed the nocturnal lights for over five minutes.

Mr D had taken his dog out into the garden when he noticed three star like lights moving through the Orion constellation and heading towards the south-east as they gained elevation in the sky. He ran inside to alert his partner and look for his video camera (no video was shot). Returning outside the lights were now over the Longley area and in a triangle formation. Soon after a shooting star shot across the sky and almost at once the three lights shot straight up and disappeared into the sky in a matter of seconds.

Out with his dog early the next morning (3.50am) D was surprised to spot the same or similar formation of three lights in the southern sky moving across to the east. Once again a shooting star went through the formation which seemed to precipitate an immediate departure upwards by the lights. They

were gone so fast it was hard to follow reported the witness. Case unexplained.

**2002. May 14th. 5.24am
Lauderdale.**

Did something pass over the Kingston to Lauderdale locations on the morning of May 14th, were the two reports to the Centre connected?

Mr R had taken his dog for an early morning walk on Lauderdale beach. This was a practice he had done for many years despite the weather conditions, on this particular day it was fine. He had been to the southern end of the beach and was returning northwards when he noticed about 25 m ahead on the beach a distinct circle of white light. The light was about 10/12 m across seemed to be connected to a beam up onto the sky.

Mr R looked up at once and briefly saw a stationary object above trees and houses to his left (west to south-west). At once the object moved over the beach ahead and as it did so the circle of light disappeared. The object went out over Frederick Henry Bay and seemed to disappear. Mr R had the impression the UFO turned away from him and the light source was no longer visible. No noise was noticed during the 6 second sighting.

The object was described as shaped like a torch with a rounded dark area at the front and light from inside along the body of the object, it looked to taper towards the rear. No flashing or individual lights were noticed. The witness gave an apparent size of about 3 moon widths.

A stunned Mr R continued on up the beach, he recalls passing another early walker who asked if he had seen the object lit up like a house and making a faint 'sizzling sound'. Mr R some time after the sighting tells that he has not met the other witness and does not know who it was.

Meanwhile at almost the same time a Kingston witness reported a strange light source in their garden. The bright light lit up an area on the patio outside the house. The strange thing was that

the sun umbrella on the patio looked to be spinning and flapping. The bright area of light flickered for a moment, and then went out. The witness thought it may have been the moon and wind causing the strange impression, however, inspection revealed the moon was not out and it was all calm outside. Case remains unexplained.

2002. May 17th. 9.15pm.

New Norfolk.

Another one of those lights that at first could be due to astronomical causes but then it departs in a manner that cannot be explained.

Two New Norfolk witnesses noticed a bright light in the south-west sky, it looked bright and white and changing colour to red and orange. It remained stationary in the sky for about three to four minutes whilst under observation. However, the disappearance of the lights was more spectacular. It just shot off towards the north-west, zipping across the top of the skyline and out of sight in a matter of seconds. The case remains unexplained.

TUFOIC TASMANIAN STATS 2002

Type	Number
Unidentified	4
Astronomical	27
Aircraft	8
Satellites	10
Meteorological	1
Balloons	5
Ground Lights	1
Other	9
Total Reports	65

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TUFOIC LOGBOOK

In their 1990 Journal of UFO Studies article on Australian Ufology, Basterfield and Godic mentioned TUFOIC as having continuously recorded the level of sightings in Tasmania since the group's formation in 1965. This database was compared with the only other continuous record maintained by the RAAF. However, the RAAF ceased recordings in 1980 whilst TUFOIC has continued their log up until the present. TUFOIC's logbook was initiated in 1969 by Keith Roberts. Research through earlier records were made to complete the information since the group's foundation in 1965. The logbook now covers some 38 years of reports to the Centre. The log provides date and time of the report, witness and contact detail, then a brief note on the sighting and a result from the investigation.

Some similarities can be noted between TUFOIC's data and that collected by the RAAF. Both sets of figures show and increase in reports during the years 1973-78, a time of heightened activity around the world. Also both sets of figures note the decline in unexplained sightings in 1979-80. It is a pity that the RAAF closed its investigation of UFO sightings at this time.

Comment should also be made on the differences in the data, which maybe more obvious than the similarities. TUFOIC tended to have a higher unexplained rate, especially in earlier years, by the late 70s the RAAF had a higher unexplained percentage. The RAAF also recorded peak years about 1967-69, no peak is noted in the Tasmanian figures.

Probably some of the differences are due to the variation in collecting sightings, the fact that the RAAF was covering the whole of Australia, and maybe investigating procedures.

No peak in Tasmania in 1967-69 could be due to the Centre being in its formative years, also activity in that part of Australia was at a lower ebb than elsewhere.

TUFOIC LOGBOOK Continued.

The Centre's unexplained percentage in early years was well above that of the RAAF. The Centre tended to receive many older cases which were added into the existing records, not something the RAAF probably did. A feature noted elsewhere in the world is that the stranger events are reported to a UFO group rather than a public authority. Many interesting cases surfaced years after the event, most usually uncovered during investigation into some other mundane event. The result is that unexplained cases would be added to earlier years whilst few if any explained sightings would be added to those figures.

The UFO percentage of reports investigated during the past 38 years is 18.8%. However, this figure has been boosted during years of intense sightings in the mid 70s and 1996. The last few years have been 50% below the average.

Astronomical explanations are the largest stimulus for a sighting, about 35% of cases being covered by this explanation. Aircraft at 13% comes in second on the list, with satellites accounting for a further 9%. Insufficient information for a conclusion covers about 10% of cases. The remaining percentage is made up by a spectrum of events such as flares, balloons, ground lights, weather, noises, hoaxes etc: just to name a few.

The most reports in the log book for a single year is 193 in 1976, this works out to be a call to the Centre every two days. A very busy time for those who do the investigation in their spare time. On the other hand the lowest number of calls in one year was 46 in both 1984 and 1990.

The year with the highest number of UFO sightings was 1974 with 58 unidentifieds. At the other end of the scale is the year just completed (2002) with a meagre 4 unexplained events.

Do you have a sighting? Maybe it will correlate with a record in the Logbook?

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STOP PRESS

Usually the Stop Press headline indicates an exciting report on a very recent UFO report. This time it is to report on rather a grim series of resignations from the Centre. As the Newsletter was being prepared we received a resignation for personal reasons from our President, Bill Kelly. Then almost at once both Ian Porritt (Network) and Alis Jacob (Publication Distribution) advised they were leaving the state and obviously could no longer perform their duties.

All three members will missed, especially as they have been active Executive members.

Meetings in February and April will review the position and hopefully we will be able to fill the vacant positions.

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PUBLICATIONS

Cressy Document.....\$3.00

The small town of Cressy experienced a series of significant UFO sightings.

Maatsuyker Island.....\$3.00

Sightings at this lonely lighthouse caught the attention in the mid 60s.

North-East Tasmania.....\$3.00

Tasmania's major UFO flap all recorded in the one publication.

Landings Catalogue.....\$3.00

UFOs seen near or at ground level plus other events.

Mysterious Melodale.....\$4.00

A baffling series of paranormal events recorded over a period of years.

TASCAT.....\$3.00

A print out of TUFOICs database of UFO sightings.

Annual Reports.....\$2.00

Some copies of the Centre's Annual Reports dating back to 1978 are still available, enquiries to the Centre.

All prices include return postage (surface mail).

Payment. Australia- money order, or bank cheque.

Overseas- International money order, or bank cheque.